

It's time to go....Nathan.

Just 35 minutes of Adelaide United's Asian Champions League match against Binh Duong remain when football's latest 'wunderkind', Nathan Burns, receives the ball inside his own half.

The match is goalless. Adelaide must win. Close to the touchline, a deft 180-degree turn beats two defenders.

He flashes past another, fires off a 30 m pass to bypass three more and Lucas Pantelis scores.

In six unforgettable minutes Burns' dazzling feet set-up a glorious hat-trick of 'assists', keeping alive United's dream of becoming the first Australian team to reach the ACL quarter finals.

'The Reds' ultimately qualified and will play Kashima in September, but it's most likely the gifted 20 year-old will be watching from Europe.

"There's that many opportunities out there you've just got to go with your gut instinct that you're going to the right place," he says.

But growing up with brothers Dustin, 21, and Jarrod, 17, in Blayney about 25 minutes drive from Orange in central NSW, Burns didn't care which sport he played.

"All you need is a ball and a wall and it could amuse me for hours," he recalls of his youth in the former gold rush town.

Morning football in Blayney and then a dash to Orange for rugby league in the afternoon was a common routine.

Blayney 88's provided the first 'greatest day in his life'; a golden-goal extra-time winner in an Under 12 grand final.

Already fleet-footed, the midfielder outwitted two players on the touchline before rifling the ball into the top corner.

Soon enough Burns realised that football offered him the best route from the back-blocks to the big smoke.

Despite being the second smallest in his age-group, by 14 Burns was at the NSW Sports Institute and on the Westfield Sports High radar in western Sydney.

Australia's first dedicated sports high school has a long list of alumni Socceroos including Harry Kewell, Jason Culina and David Carney.

Trevor Morgan, Westfield's Director of Football knew instantly that Nathan Burns was star material.

"He had lots of natural talent, is easy to work with, and his pace is a huge asset," he recalls.

"Those characteristics mean he can go on to whatever level."

Burns' father, Ray, acknowledges Morgan's 'huge influence' on his son, by giving him the confidence to succeed.

Burns credits Morgan with teaching him to play as a striker.

Westfield also made school a motivating place for Burns, who dreamt of being a Socceroo rather than a premier league student.

From Westfield it was Parramatta Power and then The Australian Institute of Sport where despite the formation of the A-League, Burns says no clubs came knocking.

"You kind of go unknown in there cos no one really knows what's happening."

It wasn't until 2006 when A-League coaches came to watch the AIS play New Zealand that Burns got his break.

"It was only United that were looking for players," Burns recalls. "Fortunately for me and Bruce {Djite} we got the chance to come down."

A two week trial turned into a two year stay, and now what looks like a lucrative overseas move, possibly to Norway's Brann Bergen where Burns trialed in February.

A recent internet survey however suggests fans remain unconvinced he'll succeed.

Just 20 per cent voted him a future superstar, but Trevor Morgan says he has to go.

"You can be in a different country in an hour. It's a different culture, the learning process is incredible.

Australia's isolation is limiting him."

Ray Burns agrees with Morgan, but says he's more proud that his son has done what he himself could not---achieve his goals.

"It all goes back to his childhood. He just wants to play at the highest level possible."

Nathan Burns won't say when he'll go, but he should judge it better than during a visit to Westfield High a year ago.

Asked to stay back to chat with the students, Burns checks the time on his phone instead of his 'bling' watch, admitting he can't read the analogue display.

Hopefully Nathan Burns will know the right time to head overseas.

It will at least ensure the kids mimicking him in their Blayney backyard cup finals have an even bigger hero to worship.